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For Immediate Release

Judicial Branch, legislators request funding for a Family Court judge to serve Bourbon, Scott and Woodford counties

FRANKFORT, Ky., Jan. 31, 2006 — A request to fund a Family Court judge for Bourbon, Scott and Woodford counties has been included in the Judicial Branch's budget recommendation to the 2006 Kentucky General Assembly, Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert announced today.

Circuit Judges Paul Isaacs and Robert Johnson, who serve these three counties, sent the funding request in a letter to the members of the Supreme Court of Kentucky. The court's seven justices approved the proposal after Justice John C. Roach advocated on its behalf.

"This judicial circuit was very much in favor of the Family Court amendment," said Justice Roach, who serves Central Kentucky's 5th Appellate District. "In 2002, 78 percent of the voters in Bourbon, Scott and Woodford counties said yes to pass the amendment. This circuit is also one of the state's most heavily populated that is still without a Family Court. I believe it's time to help these counties deal with their heavy family law caseload."

"I made establishing a Family Court one of my top priorities after taking the bench," said Judge Johnson. "Children and their families deserve a more integrated system, with one judge hearing their entire case instead of several judges hearing bits and pieces. I have always placed a priority on family cases, but establishing a Family Court should expedite these cases even more."

"With the increased caseload involving families, a new judgeship for this circuit is appropriate," said Judge Isaacs. "This area is growing and the courts must expand to continue to meet the needs of its citizens."

Those who expressed approval for the new judgeship included the state legislators who represent these counties: Sen. Julian Carroll (Woodford), Sen. R.J. Palmer II (Bourbon), Sen. Damon Thayer (Scott), House Majority Whip Rep. Joe Barrows (Woodford), Rep. Carolyn Belcher (Bourbon) and Rep. Charlie Hoffman (Scott).

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"I will strongly support and seek funding for this new Family Court judge," said Sen. Thayer. "Voters here strongly supported the Family Court amendment and Judge Rob Johnson has made me aware of the need to effectively deal with the growing caseload. I hope we are successful in securing the needed funds."

"I think it would be great for our citizens to have the opportunity to elect a new judge in the 14th Circuit," said Rep. Barrows.

This Family Court funding request has been included in the 2006-2008 Judicial Budget Recommendation that has been submitted to the 2006 General Assembly.

Family Court is a division of Circuit Court, Kentucky's highest trial court level. It employs full-time judges with the same qualifications as those who serve other divisions of Circuit Court. Family Court provides one judge to hear all of a family's issues relating to divorce, child custody, adoption, termination of parental rights, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. Because Family Court is devoted exclusively to cases involving families and children, family law cases do not compete for court time with criminal and other civil cases. Family Court was established as a permanent part of the Kentucky Constitution when the Family Court amendment passed in 2002 by 75 percent of the vote. Today Family Court serves more than 2 million Kentuckians in 43 counties.

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